



REPLY TO

MCGP-PM

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**HEADQUARTERS GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL MEDICAL COMMAND**  
**FORT SAM HOUSTON, TEXAS 78234**

15 October 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR All Health Care Beneficiaries of the Army Medical Department

SUBJECT: Influenza Immunization for the 2004-2005 Influenza Season

1. We are all aware of the recent unfortunate loss of about one-half of our nation's influenza vaccine supply. This will affect the DOD health care system even more as 65% of our vaccine supply is lost. Our Influenza Immunization Program will understandably be quite different this year. We have received a small initial shipment of influenza vaccine but the present distribution plan does not have us receiving any more vaccine until December. Recent efforts to obtain more vaccine appear promising; however, the total supply is insufficient for the nation's needs, so any gains we make will be minimal.
2. As a beneficiary, you need to know our plans and prioritizations, and what you can do to protect your health and the health of those around you. Our first priority must go to our deploying forces. They have the highest threat of infection from influenza. The remainder of the vaccine available is not enough to protect the remaining beneficiaries as in prior years. We will not, for example, be able to provide vaccine for all adults aged 65 or older but will have to concentrate on those with the highest risk due to multiple chronic medical conditions. Even then, we can guarantee no one a flu shot. We simply do not have the vaccine to allow us to provide flu shots at retiree day or other events.
3. You may have an opportunity to obtain influenza immunization elsewhere and if so we highly encourage you to obtain this protection if possible. Organizations such as local public health departments or commercial grocery or pharmacy chains may have adequate vaccine and provide immunization clinics. There are also a number of other measures that you can take to help protect from influenza: Wash your hands regularly, especially before eating, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and, when you are ill, avoid exposing others by wearing a mask and not coming into close contact. Maintain your health as well as possible with proper nutrition, rest and exercise.
4. We must all work together to avoid potentially disastrous consequences of our lack of influenza vaccine to protect our soldiers deploying to combat operations and those at the highest risk levels of contracting influenza and having a serious complication, to include death. Even so, we continue to search for ways to increase the vaccine supply and broaden our immunization program. For the latest update on vaccine availability, please call 916-7FLU (7358) and for more information about influenza and protecting yourself you may go to the Brooke Army Medical Center website at [www.bamc.amedd.army.mil](http://www.bamc.amedd.army.mil).

C. WILLIAM FOX, JR.  
Brigadier General, MC  
Commanding